BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Biomass is associated with non-fossil organic materials that contain fundamental energy derived from the sun. Biomass, frequently termed lignocellulose, is often selected from the group consisting of wood, waste paper and municipal solid waste including an individual or a combination thereof. To avoid use of corrosive. acids it is desirable to apply cellulase for hydrolysis of cellulose contained in biomass to produce sugars for subsequent fermentation.

Biomass containing hemicellulose and cellulose does not have pores readily accessible by cellulose. Removal of hemicellulose from a biomass creates pores readily accessible by cellulase and a lignocellulose containing lignins and cellulose. A means of removal of hemicellulose from a biomass is described by Grothmann, et al, in U.S. Patent 5,125,977 wherein two stages are employed relying on dilute acid to remove hemicellulose from a biomass and subject lignin to self-condensation to produce a pretreated porous biomass.

Hydrolysis of sterilized cellulose within lignocellulose, obtained from biomass frequently rely on cellulase enzymes for hydrolysis. This procedure is related by Wilke, et al, in U.S. Patent 3,972,775 wherein cellulase contained in sugar solution, obtained by hydrolysis, is absorbed by cellulose contained within cellulosic materials. Cellulosic materials containing absorbed cellulase are subjected to "a continuous process for enzymatically converting a cellulosic material to soluble sugars".. Thus absorption of cellulase on cellulose is the means described for hydrolysis to create soluble sugars. Entitled "Simultaneous saccharification and fermentation (SSF) using cellibios fermenting yeast Brettanomyces custersii," is a process presented within U.S. Patent 5,100,791 by Spindler, et al. The process is accomplished by a temperature less than allowed for rate of hydrolysis by cellulases. Accordingly the process does not establish temperature conditions for highest rate of hydrolysis. It is therefore an object of this invention to obviate the limitations or disadvantages of the prior art.

A distinct object of this invention is to employ cellulase for hydrolysis of cellulose contained within lignocellulose to create water soluble carbohydrates

A further object of this invention is to employ membranes to separate cellulases from mixtures contained within water soluble carbohydrates

Another object of this invention is to establish and maintain temperature and pH conditions for highest rate of hydrolysis allowed by cellulase for hydrolysis.

With the above and other objects in view, this invention relates to the novel features and alternatives and combinations presently described in the brief description of the invention.

APPLICATIONS OF THE INVENTION

Principles applied to present invention to produce water soluble carbohydrates derived from a biomass include:

Hemicellulose can be substantially removed from biomass containing hemicellulose by hydrolysis Pretreatment of biomass by dilute acid, described by Grothmann et al, page B-15 in Biochemical Conversion/ Alcohol Fuels Program Annual Report, November, 1988, removes hemicellulose concurrent to condensation of lignin and creates a lignocellulose with a porous consistency and renders cellulose readily accessible to cellulase enzymes,or equivalent enzymes. Accordingly hemicellulose, forming a barrier for cellulase enzymes, is removed.

Hydrolysis of cellulose by cellulases is optimized at a pH of about 4-5 and a temperature of 40-50 degrees Celsius required for hydrolysis to form water soluble glucose polymers reported in *Cellulase* on the internet.

Separation of water soluble glucose polymers, containing cellulase enzymes, depend on a membrane to separate, by a difference in molecular weight, to produce a filtrate of water soluble glucose polymers substantially devoid of enzymes and a concentrate of high molecular weight enzymes. The operation for this membrane separation is termed ultafiltration as described in Ultafiltration Application Bulletin 112 *Organics* 06/04/96. The concentrate of enzymes accordingly separated from a mixture of water soluble glucose polymers and enzymes is ready to be recycled.

Filtrate of water soluble glucose polymers, substantially devoid of enzymes, is thus created.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention in its broadest aspect, establishes a method to produce water soluble carbohydrates by hydrolysis of cellulose contained within a lignocellulose. Hydrolysis of cellulose contained within a lignocellulose is accomplished by enzymes to create a mixture of water soluble carbohydrates and enzymes. Upon hydrolysis the residue containing lignins is filtered to produce a filtrate and a residue for extraction with water. The filtered residue is extracted by water to produce an extractate and a water extracted residue. The extractate is recycled, and combined with enzymes and maintained at a pH of about 5 and a temperature of about 40-50 degrees Celsius. Consequent to providing a membrane to divide the filtrate of water soluble carbohydrates and enzymes to produce water soluble carbohydrates substantially devoid of enzymes and provides a concentrate of enzymes for recycle. The filtrate containing water soluble carbohydrates and enzymes is frequently subjected to absorption by cellulose within lignocellulose to provide absorbed enzymes for hydrolysis of cellulose contained in a lignocellulose and a diluted filtrate, containing a diminished content of enzymes, subjected to separation by the provided membrane to produce water soluble carbohydrates substantially devoid of enzymes and enzymes separated from the membrane for recycle. The enzymes are often selected from the group consisting of cellulase, glucanhydrolase and, cellobiohydrolase including an individual or a combination thereof. Hydrolysis is frequently accomplished in a vessel to constitute a continuous method.

Characteristics of the invention include:

Hydrolysis of cellulose contained within a lignocellulose is promoted by enzymes to create a mixture of water soluble carbohydrates and enzymes.

Residue, containing lignins from hydrolysis, is filtered to produce a filtered residue and a filtrate.

The filtered residue is extracted by water to form an extractate and a water extracted residue.

The mixture of water soluble carbohydrates and enzymes, subjected to molecular weight separation by a membrane provides enzymes for recycle and water soluble carbohydrates substantially devoid of enzymes.

Temperature and pH are sustained within hydrolysis to maintain maximum rate of hydrolysis.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The features that are considered characteristic of this invention are set forth in the appended claims. This invention, however, both as to its origination and method of operations as well as additional advantages will best be understood from the following description when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a flow sheet denoting the invention as set forth in the appended claims.

FIG. 2 is a flow sheet denoting a method to produce a porous lignocellulose from a biomass.

FIG. 3 is a flow sheet denoting a method to produce glucose and ethanol from water soluble carbohydrates.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, a means of producing water soluble carbohydrates derived from lignocellulose is presented. The water soluble carbohydrates are derived by hydrolysis of cellulose contained in a lignocellulose by enzymes.

The flow diagram of **Fig. 1** illustrates the general preferred embodiment of the present invention. In the diagram, rectangles represent stages, operations or functions of the present invention and not necessarily separate components. Arrows indicate direction of flow of material within the method.

Referring to **Fig. 1,** lignocellulose **10** is conveyed to hydrolysis stage **12** and combined with enzymes **14** and subjected to hydrolysis. Hydrolysis residue **22** from hydrolysis stage **12** is conveyed to filter stage **24** and filtered to produce filtrate **28** and filtered residue **26** conveyed to extract stage **30** Residue **26** is extracted by water **34** to produce extractate **36** and extracted residue **32.** Extractate **36** is conveyed to hydrolysis stage **12.** Filtrate **28** is conveyed to membrane filtration stage **16** which is employed to separate dissimilar molecular weights to produce a solution of water soluble carbohydrates substantially devoid of enzymes **20** and produce enzymes **14** to be conveyed to hydrolysis stage for recycle **12.** Membrane filtration stage **16** is generally an ultrafiltration membrane employed to separate dissimilar molecular weights. Hydrolysis of cellulose contained in lignocellulose is achieved by cellulase type enzymes to yield water soluble carbohydrates. Temperature and pH are adjusted within the hydrolysis environment to accomplish maximum hydrolysis rate allowed. Porous lignocellulose, containing cellulose, renders cellulose readily accessible to cellulase enzymes.

Referring to **Fig. 2,** biomass **40** is transported to hydrolysis stage **42,** combined with dilute acid **44** to attain hydrolysis of hemicellulose, contained within biomass, **40.** Aggregate **48,** formed by hydrolysis, is transported to filter stage **48**. Filter stage **48** performs filtration to form lignocellulose **10** and xyloses **50**. Hemicellulose, contained in biomass, is accordingly hydrolyzed to produce lignocellulose **10** substantially devoid of hemicellulose. Lignocellulose **10,** substantially lacking in hemicellulose, is accordingly rendered porous to improve absorption of enzymes by cellulose contained within lignocellulose.

Acid within lignocellulose **10** and xyloses **50** is substantially neutralized. Xyloses **50,** when neutralized, are subjected to fermentation to form ethanol. Hydrolysis stage **44** may be configured as two stages to recognize relative ease and relative difficulty of hemicellulose hydrolysis to prevent or limit formation of furfural.

Referring to **Fig. 3,** water soluble carbohydrates **20** are transported to hydrolysis stage **52** to achieve hydrolysis and produce glucose **54,** then transported to fermentation stage **56,** to accomplish fermentation to produce ethanol **58** and produce waste **60**. Hydrolysis of water soluble carbohydrates **20** may be achieved by enzymes or within an acidic environment.

Waste **60,** ultimately discarded, includes carbon dioxide produced by fermentation. Waste **60,** is separated from ethanol contained within the waste before disposal of the waste.